

REMARKS

Claims 1-32 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1, 14, 21, and 27 are independent claims and claims 2-13, 15-20, 22-26, and 28-32, respectively, depend from the independent claims. The Applicants request reconsideration of the claims in light of the following remarks.

The Applicants thank Examiner Young for the In-Office Interview conducted on May 20, 2004 at the USPTO between Examiner Young and Applicants' Agent Freddie French. In the interview, the Applicants' representative stated that, among other things, none of the cited references disclosed at least an online purchase request as set forth in the Applicants' independent claims. The Examiner agreed. The Examiner suggested that a required further search might reveal those features. The Examiner offered two additional references Mankoff US Patent 6,385,591 (Mankoff), and Messner US Patent 6,370,514 (Messner) and suggested that the two references disclosed the claim feature. The Applicants respectfully disagree. Note that no formal rejections have been constructed applying the references Mankoff and Messner.

Additionally, regarding Mankoff and Messner, the Applicants respectfully submit that the two references do not qualify as prior art because the filing priority date of Applicants' claimed invention is April 19, 1999, while Mankoff has a 102(e) date of May 11, 1999 and Messner has a 102(e) date of August 2, 1999, resulting in both references being ineligible to be used as prior art.

Claims 1-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Nichtberger US Patent 4,882,675 (Nichtberger). The Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections as follows. Claims 1, 14, 21, and 27 are independent claims.

The Applicants set forth in claim 1, a method of processing a coupon of a first party. The first party has a first system. The method may comprise offering an item online for sale at a sales price amount by a second system of a second party. The method may also comprise associating the coupon of the first party with the item. The coupon has a coupon amount. The method may also comprise receiving *an online purchase request* (emphasis added) from a buyer for the item being offered online by the second system. The method may also comprise responding, by the second system, to the online purchase request by collecting from the buyer a purchase amount corresponding to the sales price amount less the coupon amount for the item. The method may also comprise electronically communicating an indication regarding the collection from the buyer of the purchase amount by the second system to the first system.

The Applicants set forth in claim 14, a method of processing a promotion. The method may comprise offering an item online for sale at a sales price amount by a sales system of a first party. The method may also comprise associating a promotion with the item. The promotion has a promotion amount. The method may also comprise receiving *an online purchase request* (emphasis added) from a buyer for the item. The method may also comprise responding to the online purchase request by collecting from the buyer a purchase amount corresponding to the sales price amount less the promotion amount by the sales system. The method may also comprise facilitating payment of a reimbursement amount corresponding to the promotion amount to the first party by a promotion system.

The Applicants set forth in claim 21, a method of processing an electronic coupon. The method may comprise offering an item for online sale having an initial price by a first party. The first party may be associated with a first system. The method may also comprise offering a

coupon redeemable for a coupon amount by a second party. The second party may be associated with a second system. The method may also comprise receiving *an online purchase request* (emphasis added) from a buyer for the item being offered for online sale by the first system. The method may also comprise electronically associating the coupon offered by the second party with the item offered by the first party. The coupon amount may be deducted from the initial price of the item.

The Applicants set forth in claim 27, a method of processing an electronic price reduction. The method may comprise offering an item online for sale at an initial price by a sales system of a first party. The method may also comprise associating the electronic price reduction with the item. The method may also comprise receiving *an online purchase request* (emphasis added) from a buyer for the item.

Nichtberger is different from the invention set forth in Applicants independent claims 1, 14, 21, and 27 at least because Nichtberger does not disclose an online purchase request, among other things. Instead, Nichtberger discloses making a purchase in a store at a store checkout station (col. 3, line 66- col. 4, line 2). Nichtberger discloses coupons being distributed and redeemed in a store (col. 4, lines 44-47). Nichtberger discloses local stations in stores for local coupon distribution and redemption (col. 5, lines 1-5). Nichtberger does not disclose an online purchase request. Therefore, Nichtberger is different from the invention set forth in Applicants independent claims 1, 14, 21, and 27.

For at least the reason set forth above, Nichtberger fails to disclose all the features set forth in Applicants' independent claims 1, 14, 21, and 27. The Applicants respectfully assert that claims 1, 14, 21, and 27 are allowable over Nichtberger. The Applicants respectfully request that

the rejection of claims 1, 14, 21, and 27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of Nichtberger be withdrawn.

Because dependent claims 2-13, 15-20, 22-26, and 28-32, depend from independent claims 1, 14, 21, and 27, respectively, the Applicants respectfully assert that the dependent claims are also allowable over Nichtberger. Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 2-13, 15-20, 22-26, and 28-32 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of Nichtberger be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

Applicants believe that all of claims 1-32 are in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner disagree or have any questions regarding this submission, Applicants invite the Examiner to telephone the undersigned at (312) 775-8000.

A Notice of Allowability is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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